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AUTHOR	Phillips, Jim
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ABSTRACT

Designed for high school global education classes, this document examines ways in which the arms race affects the poor. Military expenditures and foreign economic aid of the developed nations are compared with survival needs of developing nations. Statistics support five premises: the arms race (1) diverts resources from productive activity and basic human needs; (2) contributes to repression of legitimate social change; (3) increases debts of poor countries who are buying increasingly modern and sophisticated weapons; (4) undermines efforts to establish a new international economic order; and (5) makes poor countries more dependent upon the superpowers. Involvement of the United States in the arms race is discussed in terms of national security, propping up the U.S. economy, jobs, technology, inflation, investment, industrial modernization, and trade. The document includes a chart from "World Military and Social Expenditures, 1981," and quotations from Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Archbishop of Canterbury, an official of Lockheed corporation, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Ideas for action and a brief list of resource materials are provided. (KC)

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THE ARMS RACE AND WORLD HUNGER

FACTS FOR ACTION NO. 4

Oct 82

Jim Phillips

Oxfam America, Boston, MA

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The Arms Race and World Hunger

Nicaragua, OA photo

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone; it is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

General Dwight Eisenhower.

How big is the arms race?

Worldwide military expenditures in 1981 exceeded $550 billion. That was 6 percent of the world's total production for that year, and two-thirds of the production of the poorer half of the world. It also equals the total annual income of the poorer half of the world.

50 million people are directly or indirectly engaged in military activities worldwide, including 25 million in the armed forces of the world, and another 10 million in paramilitary forces.

The poor countries spend more than $35 billion each year on weapons.

In 1980, the world spent $35 billion on military research. This was 25 percent of all the money spent worldwide on research of all kinds. 85 percent of the military research money was spent by two countries: the United States and the Soviet Union. If the money spent by Britain and France for military research is included, the total is over 90 percent of all military research funds spent that year.

During 1980 and 1981, about 25-35 percent of the world's industrial capability was devoted to military production.

As much as 10 percent of the world's total annual output of certain important minerals is used each year directly for military purposes. At least 6 percent of annual world gasoline production is used by the military worldwide.

How does the arms race affect the poor?

Government leaders and others usually justify this massive expenditure of the world's resources as necessary for defense and security. But militarism — massive preparation for war, such as the current international arms race — leads to less, not more, security for the people of the world. Why?

The arms race diverts precious resources away from productive activity and basic human needs.

> "It is vital that we see modern weapons of war for what they are — evidence of madness . . . This is a world where children are dying of hunger while we continue to pour our best efforts into preparing for Armageddon." Archbishop of Canterbury, 1981.

In 1981, the world spent about $22 for military purposes for every $1 it spent on development aid to poor countries.

For every dollar a developing country spends on arms, it loses about 30 cents in potential agricultural production.

The amount of money the world spends on military purposes in half of one day (12 hours) could probably eradicate malaria from the earth.

5 percent of one year's world military expenditures could provide school places for 100 million children who currently do not attend school.

5 percent of one year's world military expenditures could also provide basic education to 25 million illiterate adults in the world.

Subsidized dining by officials at the Pentagon costs taxpayers in the United States $14 per meal per person. School lunch programs in the United States are subsidized at about $1.20 per meal.

The annual budget for United States military bands is larger than the annual United States budget allocations for all civilian art programs.

Oxfam photo

Some poor countries currently spend as much as ten times more on weapons than on health, education and welfare combined.

The arms race contributes to repression of legitimate social change, creates fear and insecurity about the future, and undermines normal activity and development efforts.

The current situation in Guatemala starkly illustrates this. Many decades of poverty, repression and injustice have fostered strong movements for social change in Guatemala today. Many Guatemalans feel that peaceful avenues to change have been blocked by a small elite supported by the Guatemalan Army. The Army has been using forced conscription of poor peasant youths as one of several means of repression. Eyewitness accounts in a recent Oxfam America study* describe the suffering, fear and insecurity which military activity and repression have caused:

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*OXFAM AMERICA IMPACT AUDIT #2: Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala, by Shelton H. Davis and Julie Hodson (Oxfam America, 1982). 54 pp. $5.00. Available from Oxfam America.

Oxfam photo

"In some areas, helicopters and army troops harass farmers and burn fields with crops. Because of fighting between the army and guerrilla groups, farmers have not been able to plant or cultivate . . ."

"It is obvious that there will be a shortage of food as the flight and repression grow. Prices are skyrocketing . . . You can be sure that there will be a shortage again this year as the farmers disappear or are prevented from going into their fields because of fear."

"All community-based work ground to a halt. Vaccination campaigns were curtailed; latrine projects could not be continued; and health promoter projects were halted."

"Student doctors and nurses are afraid to go to isolated communities and therefore health care has been cut off. Many health promoters have been threatened or killed . . ."

"Almost all schools in the combat area are unable to function. Families have fled to the hills. Teachers are one of the prime targets of the army, and they have fled, gone into hiding, or been killed."

Military aid and arms sales from some industrialized nations, as well as training of Guatemalan military and police by other countries have made it easier for the Guatemalan military to control and repress even such basic reforms as better health care and literacy programs.

The arms race increases the debts of poor countries while it worsens their economic position and the lives of their poor.

In recent years, poor countries have bought increasingly modern and sophisticated weapons, in an effort to keep up with their neighbors. As local and regional arms races among poor countries increase in size, sophistication and cost, poor countries find themselves with sharply mounting debts to the richer, arms-selling nations. Pakistan, to take just one example, already spends half its total national budget for military purposes — ten times what it spends on health, education and welfare combined. Yet in 1982 Pakistan decided it needed an additional $1.6 billion worth of new military equipment from the United States. This of course increases Pakistan's huge foreign debt, which already eats up 30 percent of its total budget each year in service charges alone. Even without the additional arms, Pakistan is spending 80 percent of its annual budget on arms and debt service payments — leaving only 20 percent for all other needs combined. Meanwhile, most Pakistanis live in mud dwellings, and only one person in four has access to safe drinking water.

Compounding the debt problem is the fact that in many poor countries military spending has risen much faster than productivity or economic growth. In Kenya, for example, productivity per person rose by 80 percent between 1977 and 1979, while military spending rose by over 400 percent. This creates economic burdens for the poor, especially, by increasing the rate of inflation and decreasing the amount which the government is likely to spend on basic human needs. When popular unrest is caused by worsening economic conditions, governments may turn some of their newly-acquired weapons and military training against their own people, or engage in military adventures against neighboring countries in order to distract attention from deteriorating economic conditions at home.

The arms race undermines efforts to establish a new international economic order.

"The world can either continue to pursue the arms race or move consciously and with deliberate speed toward a more sustainable international economic and political order. It cannot do both. The arms race and development are thus in a competitive relationship, particularly in terms of resources. Or, put another way, the arms race and underdevelopment are not two problems; they are one. They must be solved together or neither will ever be solved."

> Inga Thorsson, Undersecretary of State, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Chair of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Disarmament and Development, 1982.

The creation of a new and more equitable international economic order has been a primary goal of international negotiations between rich and poor countries for years. Many world leaders believe that poor countries could gain a more solid and secure basis for their economic development and security if their demands for a new international economic order were met.

But the arms race undermines progress toward this goal. For all the reasons we have already mentioned, the arms race increases the tensions among poor countries. It also increases tensions as the poor countries become indebted, and the gap between rich and poor countries widens.

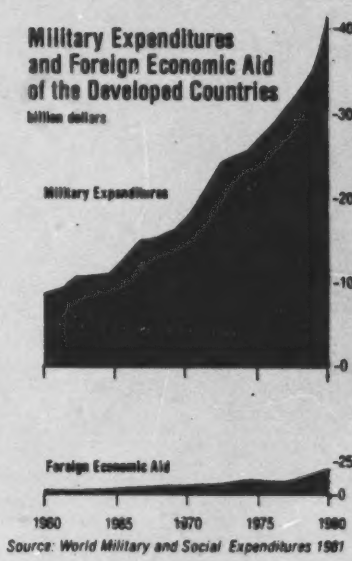
The arms race makes poor countries more dependent upon the superpowers, and accelerates regional conflicts among poor countries.

"When you buy an airplane, you also buy a supplier and a supply line — in other words, you buy a political partner."

> Official of Lockheed Corporation, a major United States arms producer.

95 percent of all the wars and armed conflicts since the Second World War have been fought in developing countries — not in the wealthy industrialized nations. The wealthy countries, and the superpowers in particular, strive for economic, political and military influence among poor countries, and sometimes aggravate regional tensions and conflicts by supplying arms to opposing sides. Ethiopia and Somalia, for example, are two of the world's poorest nations, and both have been armed and supported by the superpowers. Meanwhile, a devastating drought has plagued the region for years, adding to the sufferings of local people in both countries. To poverty, drought and Somalia's already weak economic position has been added the burden of carrying on a costly war. A major part of the burden is providing minimal facilities for approximately 1.3 million refugees who have come into Somalia in recent years as a result of the war and the drought. Oxfam America and other outside agencies have helped by providing relief and development aid.

The attempt to keep up with the increasingly modern and sophisticated weapons of neighboring countries causes many poor nations to purchase larger supplies of the most modern (and expensive) weapons available to them. This makes the poor countries more dependent upon the richer, arms-supplying nations for the skilled technicians and sophisticated military parts which most poor nations cannot provide for themselves. For poor countries, increasing sophistication in weaponry means increasing dependency upon the weapon makers, and makes wars and conflicts between poor countries more destructive and devastating.



Source: World Military and Social Expenditures 1981

Upper Volta. Oxfam photo

Oxfam photo

The Poverty-Repression-Militarisation Cycle

purchase of arms and luxuries
lack of foreign exchange
international loans; policies for increasing exports
loss food production for local consumption and impoverishment of the society
revolt; political opposition
repression, concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the elite

Source: COPAT, London.

Why does United States involvement in the arms race continue?

National Security.

"Our interest is to create strong countries that can offer resistance to the Soviets. This means we're fighting the Soviets on foreign soil, not our own."

United States government official commenting on the 1982 sale of United States arms to Pakistan.

United States officials justify the arms race as essential for national security. Military power is seen as the way to promote strength among nations which can defend United States interests and security.

Increasingly, however, the arms race that is supposed to lead to military strength for poor and developing nations appears to be leading instead to economic insecurity and even economic collapse, for reasons we have already mentioned. Deteriorating economic conditions in poor countries, greatly aggravated by the arms race, may not be the best way to guarantee strength and security for the developing countries.

Worse, the perception that strength for poor countries comes from military buildup has caused the United States to give or sell arms to some brutal dictatorships in the poor world. When governments use U.S.-made weapons for repression, the United States itself becomes identified with this repression.

Bangladesh. OA photo

Kampuchea. OA photo

United States economic interests abroad.

United States arms sales and expansion of military aid to poor countries have sometimes been used to protect United States economic interests and investments in those countries. When a newly-elected government in Chile in 1970 was perceived to be unfriendly to the interests of North American copper companies and other United States corporations with large investments in Chile, the United States government cut off all economic and humanitarian aid to Chile, but greatly increased military aid to that country. Military aid continued in large amounts until the armed forces overthrew the elected civilian government in a bloody coup which included the torture and death of thousands of civilians. The armed forces then began a dictatorship which was seen as more friendly to United States economic and military interests.

In many poor countries, the United States has increased arms sales and training not only to the military but to the police, as well, for "internal security" which is sometimes interpreted to include repressing even such innocuous reforms as literacy and health programs.

Between 1974 and 1977, the United States government sold to Third World police forces: 50,000 handguns; 10,000 machine guns; 155,000 gas grenades; and 296 armored cars. United States police and military personnel also trained thousands of police in Third World countries.

Propping up the United States economy

"The security we profess to seek in foreign adventures we will lose in our decaying cities. The bombs in Vietnam explode at home . . . they destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Some people believe that increased military spending strengthens the United States economy. There is evidence, however, that expanding the arms race is not a good way to help the United States economy.

Jobs:

Researchers find that military spending is one of the least job-generating ways to spend money. "Military expenditures do not yield as many jobs as the same amount of money spent by government for civilian purposes. Dollar for dollar, more employment is created through such public endeavors as construction, transit systems, health services and schools. The latter also create more job skills that are transferable and useful in the expansion of the economy . . ."

World Military and Social Expenditures, 1981, p. 20.

Technology:

"It is evident that civilian spin-offs from military research, if not in all cases negligible, have been trifling in comparison with the resources with which they were bought and with the results that could have been achieved if the efforts had been aimed directly at the civilian applications."

United Nations General Assembly, 1977: "Economic and Social Consequences of the Armaments Race and Its Extremely Harmful Effects on World Peace and Security."

Inflation:
While military spending may not be a sole or primary cause of inflation, there is evidence that large-scale arms spending, which circulates money in the United States economy without creating more productive services or goods for people to buy and use, does contribute to rising prices for the goods and services which are available.

Investment, Industrial Modernization and Trade:
As money is increasingly invested in military research and production, that money is diverted from other kinds of investment, including expanding or modernizing outmoded United States industrial plants, which must compete with foreign producers. As American companies fall behind foreign competitors, United States industries and businesses are weakened, jobs are lost, and the United States economy is weakened. Relying on increased arms sales abroad to make up the loss only aggravates the problems.

What Can We Do?

"The most potentially explosive force in the world today is the frustrated desire of poor people to attain a decent standard of living. The anger, desperation and often hatred that result represent real threats to international order . . . As the aspirations and expectations of the developing world grow, poverty within it remains prevalent and conspicuous — with hunger as its quintessential symptom . . .

"Since the advent of nuclear weapons, most Americans have been conditioned to equate national security with the strength of strategic military forces. The (Presidential) Commission considers this prevailing belief to be a simplistic illusion . . . Military force is ultimately useless in the absence of the global security that only coordinated international progress toward social justice can bring."

Presidential Commission on World Hunger, 1980

We can begin — in our thinking and discussion — to redefine the meaning of security, stressing the need for all people to have a decent standard of living with a guaranteed access to enough of the world's resources. Instead of asking, "Who is the enemy and how armed is he?" We can begin to ask, "What are the problems and needs of the world's people and how can these be overcome?"

We can begin to work for a diversion of some of our current massive military spending toward more productive and human needs.

This might include:

Working for a United States budget which does not fail to meet the needs of the poor in the United States in order to expand the arms race.

Working for more economic and less military aid to poor countries that are trying to meet the human aspirations of their people.

Working to convert some of our current military industries to more productive industries (for example, one United States aircraft company has partially converted to making subway cars).

Working to reduce the waste of precious world resources which the United States currently uses, so that we will have less need to rely on military power to secure these resources from other countries. (With 5 percent of the world's population, the United States consumes 40 percent of the world's yearly resource production.)

We can begin to support a more sustainable, self-reliant human development for ourselves and others. Oxfam America's primary concern is supporting self-reliant development, people working together to secure their own basic needs, using their own resources and making their own decisions. The security, well-being and cooperation which such human development promotes can be a more secure basis for human life than the instability, waste, and dependency caused by the world's current arms race. Oxfam America's experience in Kampuchea (Cambodia) provides one example, among many, of this realization.

By the autumn of 1979, five years of war and nearly four years of violent rule by the Khmer Rouge had shattered the resources of Kampuchea (Cambodia). As many as two million Kampucheans had perished from war, starvation, disease and mass murder by their own leaders. Thousands of acres of farmland had been destroyed or abandoned. Cities were dismantled, temples blown up and roads obliterated. When the Khmer Rouge were finally driven from power, the country was in chaos, and appeared to lack most of the resources needed to rebuild.

Realizing the need for secure redevelopment in Kampuchea, Oxfam America's involvement went beyond immediate disaster and humanitarian relief assistance. Our goal was to help Kampuchea attain self-reliance in meeting its own needs and building its own future. In Kampuchea over 90 percent of the people live by farming, so development had to begin with rebuilding self-reliant local food production. Currently, Oxfam America's assistance to the people of Kampuchea totals nearly $400,000 for development of traditional and improved types of rice seedlings and for basic agricultural training. In the future, Kampuchea's ability to feed itself and provide for its basic needs will strengthen its own security and that of the entire region.

Jim Phillips,
Oxfam America
Staff

Oxfam America
115 Broadway
Boston, Massachusetts 02116
(617) 482-1211

Ideas for Action

Show a film or organize a teach-in on disarmament and development issues. The following organizations provide good information and handouts, and may be able to recommend speakers for your event:

National Action Research on the Military Industrial Complex (NARMIC), 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, is a good source of information on the impact of militarism in your own community.

SANE, 514 C Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20002, is a grassroots action and lobbying organization.

United Nations Disarmament Office, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, has materials on the world disarmament campaign.

Two good films dealing with the human impact of the arms race are: **"The Race that Nobody Wins,"** available from SANE (see above). **"Whose Budget is It Anyway?"** available from NARMIC (see above).

Write to newspapers and your Congressional representatives. Express your views and provide them with information on disarmament and development issues. Contact Oxfam America for guidelines on press releases, and writing articles and letters to newspaper editors. Contact **Bread for the World,** 32 Union Square, New York, NY 10003, for information

Ecuador, Oxfam photo

on how to influence Congress. For information on current legislation and action guides to local organizing, contact the **Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy,** 120 Maryland Avenue, Washington, DC 20002.

Form a small group to investigate the impact of militarism in your own community. Making the global-local linkages demonstrates the universality of the problem and makes the issue more immediate. NARMIC and SANE (see above) have excellent resources on this topic.

Organize a fundraising event. "A Walk for Survival," for instance, is a good way to publicize the issues in your community and get coverage in the local media.

There are many other ways you can raise people's consciousness about armament and development. Contact Oxfam America for more educational and fundraising ideas.

Further Reading:

Brown, Lester R., **Redefining National Security.** Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute. 46 pp. $2.00. Available from Worldwatch Institute, 1176 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Committee on Poverty and the Arms Trade, **Bombs for Breakfast.** London, England: COPAT, 1978. 42 pp. $2.00. Available from COPAT Publications, 5 Caledonia Road, London N1 9DX.

Third World First, **Nuclear Links: The Chain Reaction of Arms Energy and Underdevelopment.** London, England: Third World First, 1981. 30 pp. $1.75. Available from Oxfam America.

The statistical and factual sources for this issue include: **The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,** June-July, 1982. Periodical published in the U.S.

New Internationalist, May, 1977. Published monthly in Wallingford, England.

Sivard, Ruth Leger, **World Military and Social Expenditures, 1981.** Leesburg, VA: World Priorities, 1981. Available from Oxfam America.

United Nations, **Economic and Social Consequences of the Arms Race and Its Extremely Harmful Effects on World Peace and Security.** Report of the Secretary General to the General Assembly. New York, NY: United Nations, 12 August, 1977.

United Nations, **Report on Disarmament and Development.** New York, NY: United Nations, 1981.

Nicaragua, OA photo

Oxfam America is an international development and disaster relief organization based in Boston. Oxfam America was founded in 1970 and is one of six autonomous Oxfams, including two in Canada and one each in Great Britain, Australia and Belgium. The name "Oxfam" came from the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, founded in England in 1942. Building self-reliance is our most important goal. We fund local, grassroots groups in 21 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the United States, Oxfam America works to inform policymakers and the general public about the root causes of world hunger and poverty. Oxfam America neither seeks nor accepts government funds, but relies entirely upon private institutions and citizens.